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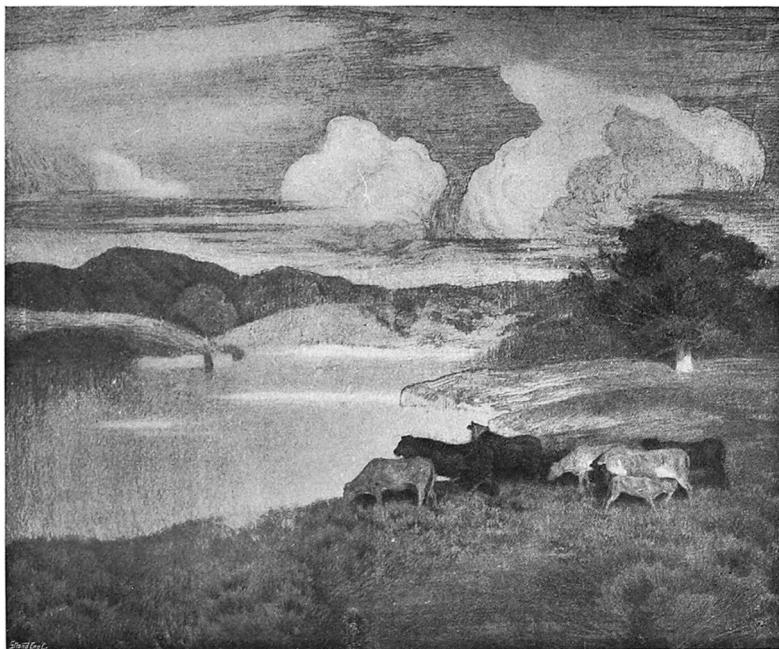
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LE TROUPEAU
By René Ménard
In the Luxembourg

THE FAMOUS MASSARANTI COLLECTION

One of the most important art collections ever brought to America is that which bears the name of Massaranti—the Rev. Marcello Massaranti, an aged member of the household of Pope Leo XIII.—which was purchased in its entirety by Henry Walters, of Baltimore, at a cost, it is said, of one million dollars. Just what is comprised in this magnificent aggregation of treasures few even of Mr. Walters's most intimate friends have the slightest comprehension. When the collection arrived in this country speculation was rife, both as to its character and as to the disposal the purchaser meant ultimately to make of it. But Mr. Walters has been reticent, refusing to give definite information about the matter. Various reports were circulated—that the purchaser intended to give the collection to one of the prominent public art museums, that he wished to make it the nucleus of a national gallery, that he purposed to add it to his already remarkable collection in Baltimore, and so forth. After a time, however,

public curiosity abated, and Dame Rumor ceased her gossip. The treasures passed from public notice, and from that day to this an air of mystery has surrounded the famous collection.

Now it is announced that not for at least a year to come will the public have an opportunity to look at this perhaps the most remarkable assemblage of paintings and art objects ever brought to this country. The two hundred and seventy-five cases constituted the cargo of the British steamship *Minterne*, which brought them to New York. Two hundred and fifteen of the cases are stored away on the tenth floor of the Parker Building, at Fourth Avenue and Nineteenth Street, and the others are in a loft in the four-story building at No. 542 West Fifteenth Street. The steamship was specially chartered for the transportation of the collection, and it is said that a duty of ninety thousand dollars was paid by Mr. Walters on his treasures.



PORTRAIT OF LOUIS MÉNARD
By René Ménard
In the Luxembourg

Art-lovers the country over are awaiting the time when they can have an opportunity to inspect the collection. In addition to its artistic value it is surrounded, as a recently published announcement says, by a halo of romance. "Don Marcello," as the Rev. Marcello Massaranti was affectionately called, was ninety years old when he sold the collection. He was not considered a wealthy man, but he was one of the best judges of art in Rome. He had spent practically his whole life in gathering the thousand or more examples embraced in the collection that now bears his name. He bought slowly and he selected with the greatest care. He rejected everything that was not genuine, and he was too much of an expert to be deceived by the pretensions of unscrupulous dealers.

It is impossible to tell what he spent in gathering these wonders of art. It is thought the total sum is insignificant compared with their value to-day, for he spent nearly three-quarters of a century making his selections. When he saw the end of his life approaching, he decided to dispose of the fruits of his labor of a lifetime. The collection represented sacrifices that few men would have been willing to undergo. He did not wish to see it broken up.

He could have sold it for two million dollars had he been willing to permit its division into separate lots. But this he was not willing to do. For this reason he made arrangements with the Italian government to permit him to dispose of it as a whole, even if this entailed its removal to a foreign country. In order to obtain this concession the priest presented several rare examples to the Italian government, and made a substantial cash contribution to the funds for the support of the national museum.

European collectors were aware of the existence of the Massaranti collection, and they knew it was for sale, but none was willing to bid the amount necessary for the purchase of the collection as a whole. With the exception of one man, it had entirely escaped the notice of American connoisseurs. On one of his visits to Rome—I am indebted for these facts to the enterprise of an Eastern correspondent—Dr. J. H. Senner, formerly commissioner of immigration, discovered it, and on his return to this country endeavored to induce several Americans of wealth to purchase it and present it to a museum. In this he failed, and then he directed the attention of Mr. Walters to it, with the result that the collection, although in private hands, will ultimately, it is thought, be reckoned among the public art treasures of the United States. For the present, however, Mr. Walters intends to install it in his private art gallery at Mount Vernon Place in Baltimore.

No one outside of the government appraisers has been permitted to see the collection. On this point the orders of Mr. Walters were imperative. He did not care for publicity concerning his purchase until the completion of an addition to his galleries. It is known,

however, that several of the pieces of statuary are quite imposing, for some of the packages weighed at least three tons. The loft of the Parker Building, which contains sixteen thousand square feet of space, was inadequate for storing it, and this gives an idea of its magnitude.

Among the paintings, it is known, are the famous "St. Christopher," by Titian, one of the best examples of Paul Veronese, and a portrait by David. One of the gems of the collection is said to be a thirteenth-century painting by an unknown artist. The government appraisers shared the general curiosity concerning the collection, and although they were silent as to the details, all spoke with enthusiasm of the genuineness and value of Mr. Walters's purchase.

Mr. Walters is a son of William A. Walters, who for years was known as one of the foremost art connoisseurs of America. The elder Walters turned to art collecting early in life. He did this, published report has it, through the advice of his mother, who urged him to avoid giving all his time to business—to have some hobby outside the realm of the workaday world. The collection he founded is said to be worth more than two million dollars, and it is one of the show sights of Baltimore. On certain days of the week every year the Walters galleries are open. The money paid for admission is set aside for the poor. The collection contains many rare paintings and pieces of statuary, while some of the miniatures are almost priceless. Among the miniatures are portraits of Napoleon and the Empress Marie Louise on a snuff-box presented to Bernadotte after he became King of Sweden. There are also nine Cosway miniatures from the collection of the Earl of Chichester and two by Nattier, once the property of Marquis de Biron.

With the addition of the Massaranti collection at the end of another year, the Walters galleries will have no superior in America, so far as private collections are concerned. No one, of course, knows what will be the fate of this magnificent assemblage. It may ultimately come under the hammer, as so many other notable collections have, but this is scarcely deemed probable. It is thought that the same spirit that prompted Massaranti himself to maintain his collection in its entirety, by taking less than half as much for his treasures as he could have realized for them if he had wished to parcel them out in lots, will govern the action of the present owner, and that the whole Walters collection will finally go in its entirety to some public institution.

ALLAN C. BIXBY.

